1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012



361 between these two Sides. Close to this now stands the Roman Catholic Mission, and separating this beach from Kowu is a sandy spit now called [797] by the white men Point Vidil, after the Mission founder, who died on the island on Easter Eve 1898.[1]

## BRIEF NOTE ON EVERYDAY LIFE

512 If in the cool season, we may now rest awhile on any one of these beaches, watching the still splendour of the tropic noon or, at low tide, minute blue fishes swimming in the pools. Small girls, perhaps, will pass looking for shellfish on the reef, or an occasional old woman seat herself beneath a shady tree on the shore side to plait.

During most seasons of the year it would be possible during the middle of the day to walk from one end of the island to the other without seeing a soul, save, maybe, for old women too feeble to work, old men who, after a recent performance of the Maki rite, have taken vows to stay at home, together with their wives who now must feed them since they are too holy to touch their own food, small children, or a young man sick with yaws. Everyone else is busy on the mainland, and the Small Island is empty of human life.

But, if we wait till the late afternoon, a very different scene meets our eyes. Now, one by one, canoes laden with produce put out from the mainland creeks, each making for its own landing-place on Vao. Bananas, yams, green "native cabbage," mangoes, mammy apples, perhaps a flying fox, fish caught in traps (there is no hook-and-line fishing), parcels of sundry foods tied up in green leaves, all are unloaded amidst laughter and a general sense of well-being after a cheerful day. Canoes are dragged ashore. Children and young boys bathe, shouting and slapping the water to keep off stray sharks. The women carry the produce homeward. The men see to the gear. Parties enquire from one another how the day has fared. And so, with endless delays, gradually the beaches empty and the villages become alive.

*House-enclosures.*

342 592 Within the village[2] each married man possesses an enclosure, fenced round with stones usually surmounted by a high screen of interwoven

[1] Père Vidil died from eating a dish of crayfish that had gone bad. His death was wrongly attributed to the malignity of the Vao folk, who were accused of having poisoned the crayfish. Mgr. Douceré hotly denies this imputation (see Douceré, pp. 202 ff.).

[2] This paragraph is based on my knowledge of conditions on Atchin, where I made detailed records of the arrangements inside the house-enclosures which I did not repeat on Vao. A much fuller description, together with native terms, will be given in a later volume. So far as I know, the conditions described here do not differ greatly from those on Vao, though the organisation into Lodges given in the following paragraph differs considerably from that on the remaining Small Islands.

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
OO12 Malekula OO12



Tattoo is elaborately humanistic in the Banks Islands; simpler on Pentecost, with occasional spirals and circles; intricately angular on Omba; on Santo simple geometric patterns, almost entirely non-representative. Scarification replaces tattoo in Sakau. On Malekula I have not seen tattoo.

I found that chance, individuality, error, misinterpretation, war, and wind were most important in determining the cultures I investigated; these are allowed no place anywhere in Rivers' 'History of Melanesian Society' (1914). I have also much evidence for the spread of ideas and objects ahead or independent of the people who originally brought them, often accidentally, to one point. There is little evidence to be found for logical coherent waves of the Riversian "*kava* people" type into this part of Melanesia. And whereas movements have generally been considered to pass from the north southwards, there is no doubt that the two most obvious diffusions which I have been able to trace spread westward from Omba, which was almost certainly effected from the east, and northward from Efate through Emae, Tongoa, Hambi to south Malekula; important culture traits in Santo have largely been derived from Malo to the south. After studying the literature and the people themselves, I have come to the conclusion that the culture of south Melanesia is even more complex than had previously been supposed. Far more data are needed to make any broad generalizations valuable. There are still whole islands about whose culture we know nothing. The forthcoming work of Layard, and to a lesser extent my own, will I think demonstrate that some of the north Malekulan and Atchin traits can be associated with ritual or belief all over the Pacific and in much remoter parts of the world. These islands seem to have received the last flickers and backwashes from every step in world evolution: that is true for the period of white influence too.

*Present position in the Group*

The white is in general disliked by the native: mission natives sometimes like their missionaries. What respect black has for white is founded on what the former calls the latter's "cleverness"—the things he can make, his tinned sardines and launch engines. Among many peoples now, especially on Omba, Efate, Tongoa, and Nguna, there is a dawning determination to have some say in their own affairs. Now the natives have no control of any sort; they know they are being underpaid or misused. Their lack of unity has been and is the main obstacle to reform. Land in particular will be a future problem. On some islands the French claim more land than there is above water; they vigorously curtail the expansion of the native in every direction, and notably on Aore and Malo have driven out whole villages. Among the bushmen anti-white feeling is generally strong but passive; for here there is little concern with the small world outside. And whereas the bushmen are without exception decreasing, the coastal peoples in many parts, and invariably when close to a missionary and his medicines, are increasing.

On the basis of a very detailed study (to be published elsewhere) I am convinced that a hundred and fifty years ago there were not less than one million natives in the group; there are now about forty-five thousand. "Civilization" has crept on, though perhaps more slowly than anywhere else in the world. It is the missionary and the germ that has made the coast safe for civilization.

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
0012 Malekula 0012
Big Nambas



From the first missionary, John Williams, murdered in 1839, until the present day, these devoted men, working according to their own lights, meeting often with sudden death, have been the only influence for good and sanity of any sort; even had they accomplished nothing, the missionaries would be the best people in island history. It was not always the Mission who converted the people or disrupted the native civilization. It was the chaos of endless new unknown diseases, the fundamental cultural upset due to iron and firearms. In seeking protection from these and from the other whites who brought them, the natives came to the missionary. The early records of the group are a ghastly list of introduced diseases—scarlet fever, measles, consumption, smallpox, phthisis, gonorrhoea, whooping cough, influenza, diphtheria, meningitis—all fatal to these people. The population, particularly where it was much in contact with whites, was decimated. Their culture was based on a certain speed, rhythm, and age-cycle; the sudden death of artist, magician, or chief upset the whole. The old beliefs, ancient gods, countermagics, and native herbs, could do nothing; so they turned to the white man's god, who must be stronger than their own. The new trend among the missionized people, as it gathers internal momentum, shows signs of turning against its instigators, the white missionaries. So far experiments in founding a native-run church have regularly failed. The new motive power is economic rather than religious; some revival of passive heathenism is an ingredient. The price of copra, regulated by the combines far away in Europe, has become in many ways the determining factor. During the period of my visit copra prices reached their lowest level. The missionized natives have become dependent on their coconuts to earn them money for knives, calico, tobacco, belts, even bread, rice, and tinned meat—the substitutes for "heathen" things that have become extinct through mission influence. Low prices mean little money and a standard of living reduced below the level of the last thirty years, in many ways below that of the heathen bushmen. This annoys the native against the white, who has created these demands and will not satisfy them; and a shirt has become the essential symbol of a mission native, to such an extent that without a shirt he feels no longer Christian. I doubt if the group has within sight an important economic future for the white man, despite the recent optimistic accounts of Archimbaud (1927) and Lop (1933). The Chinese and Japanese are rapidly gaining economic power; they may find in these fever- and cyclone-ridden islands an important outlet. Half-castes are not numerous. French ones rank equal with pure Frenchmen as citizens, and run many French plantations.

Recently the administration have to some extent changed their policy, for example in relation to trouble within the native community and in appointing me to pacify the Big Nambas. The native will therefore expect more arbitration in future; if it is not provided, the administration will be discredited, to the danger of all whites.

So the age-long cycle goes on. The native population was never stable, either in culture or in numbers. When Quiros came the population was about at a peak in the north; now it has reached a trough, on the interminable up and down of all races. It is time for the Melanesian to climb again. He is climbing wherever conditions are at all favourable. And the vital question

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
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Big Nambas



but they do not attempt to help the heathens, unless the heathens come down to the often unhealthy coast and adopt the externals of Christianity. The Missions do not go to the natives, and in Santo, Malekula, and Malo, out of about six thousand Christians, only thirty live away from the sea. In the hills there is no malaria, consumption, or elephantiasis; when the hill-men come to the sea they quickly go down with fever, and the slightest additional sickness will kill them. Mission history is a ghastly list of great settlements created by the Missions on the coast, and now almost or entirely extinct. Aneityum, west Malekula, and west Santo show plenty of examples. I have already made the point that it is similarly fatal for missions to neglect their converts in outlying districts; this is done all over the group. The recruiters do the same

thing, only in a different way, by taking bush natives to work in plantations; they are more concerned to keep their men well, because if a man dies his tribe will not work for that recruiter any more. Long ago Anthony Trollope wrote a delightful account of the benefits due to Queensland blackbirding; Campbell (1874, p. 69), whose account of the southern isles in 1864 is lucid and unbiased, demonstrated the fallacy in Trollope's reasoning, and further pointed out that ex-plantation natives often become the most dangerous on their return to the bush, which is equally true to-day, especially of trained native police.

In my section of the Big Nambas I have shown that modern warfare, unlike the old form, is socially harmful; all natives should be disarmed; vigorous medical work started and maintained throughout the islands; the fish *Bam-*

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
0012 Malekula 0012
Atchin



*busia* introduced to destroy mosquito larvae; the movements of hill people to the sea controlled; no women should be allowed to work on a plantation. If these steps are taken the physical conservation of the bushman may be achieved.

The cultural conservation technique cannot be expressed so concretely. It is too late to preserve the pattern complete. There is however a good alternative, and I can best give my point of view by describing a concrete example of what can happen with proper guidance or good luck, as on the island of Atchin.

(ii) *Atchin*, 1935.—There is no doubt that on small islands a mile or less across health is much better and *Anopheles* mosquitoes are often absent. They are the small island populations which are increasing most rapidly throughout the group, though some are still decreasing, and in these islands I see the best future of the race. Most have mainly mission populations, but on some heathens are dominant. One such is Atchin, half a mile off the east coast of Malekula; of the four hundred and eighty natives less than two dozen are Christians. A Seventh Day Adventist missionary lived there for many years, and all the other missions maintain native teachers there. The missions have had no success, but the natives got some ideas from them which they have incorporated into their own culture. More valuable has proved the visit of an anthropologist, John W. Layard. He was there more than twenty years ago, but to this day is remembered as Tsoni (Johnny). He gained a remarkable understanding of the Atchinese, and his sympathy greatly encouraged the people to keep up their old heathen customs. Like all Hebrideans, the Atchinese sold land to the whites for a few guns in the early days. Unlike all the rest, they have since bought it back. Their country is their own. As their yam gardens are on the mainland, they are expert canoeists; they still keep up the old canoe voyages to Ambrym, trading penis-wrappers for pigs; to Malo, Santo, and east Malekula. The old turmeric-dye leaf trade has been taken over by French ships, and for some years now there has been no ritual sex-initiation voyage to Omba, home of the benign deity Ta-har (= Tagaro). The best fishermen, whole villages club their copra together to get a modern European drag net; but do not let decay the ancient stone-wall trap, a sort of lobster-pot, and the special handnets for the Palolo worm, which at certain seasons appears in millions, giving its name to three of the lunar months. They run their own stores and sell their own copra to the highest bidder of the several ships that call in search of this lucrative trade. They encourage whites to visit but not to stop. They make sham spears to sell to world-touring yachts which call regularly to see these remarkably safe savages; the real spears they do not show. They have twice done all their dances for film companies, in no way to the detriment of the dance culture or significance, rather the opposite. Baker (1935, p. 212) says of the Sakaus, Santo: "If they had been persuaded to dance for the tourists it would have been the beginning of the break-up of their culture, in which dancing plays an important part. . . . The prostitution of their culture by tourists would be deleterious not only to themselves but also to social anthropology." Apart from the fact that the Sakaus have unfortunately lost, almost forgotten, the whole dance-cycle of the highest chiefly grade (*vuster*), and that the special dance for the marriage of a